

# **MORTALITY DEFINITIONS**

## **MORTALITY WITHOUT OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT (NON-PREVENTABLE)**

An event or complication that is a sequela of a procedure, a disease, an illness, or an injury for which reasonable and appropriate preventable steps had been taken

*Example:* A gunshot wound to the head with a GCS of 3 on arrival and subsequent death, posttraumatic pancreatitis, pneumonia, DVT and so on in patients who had appropriate preventative steps taken. Most deaths and morbidities fall into this category.

## **ANTICIPATED MORTALITY WITH OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT (PREVENTABLE)**

An event or complication that is an expected or unexpected sequela of a procedure, a disease, an illness, or an injury that is likely to have been prevented or substantially ameliorated, had appropriate steps been taken.

*Example:* A patient admitted with abdominal distention and shock that dies from a ruptured spleen two hours later while waiting for a surgeon. Death as a result of a missed epidural hematoma or esophageal intubation may be preventable. A missed fracture resulting from failure to examine the patient may be a preventable mortality. Preventable mortalities should be very unusual in a mature trauma system.

## **UNANTICIPATED MORTALITY WITH OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT (POTENTIALLY (POSSIBLY) PREVENTABLE)**

An event or complication that is a sequela of a procedure, a disease, an illness or an injury that has the potential to be prevented or substantially ameliorated

*Example:* A potentially preventable mortality may be an elderly trauma patient with a severe head injury who develops a fatal arrhythmia from an electrolyte abnormality. The arrhythmia may not have been preventable, but it is unlikely that the death was; therefore, the death is deemed “potentially preventable”. A patient suffering a preventable morbidity that subsequently expires after being declared DNR by family or advanced directive may be determined to be a potentially preventable mortality. There is no precision in these determinations; these are clinical judgments based upon the best available evidence.